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YOU CAN TRIUMPH

A Series of Six Lessons Devoted to:

I. TRIUMPH OVER ANXIETY

IV. TRIUMPH OVER GUILT

II. TRIUMPH OVER FATIGUE

V. TRIUMPH OVER LONELINESS

III. TRIUMPH OVER SELF-PITY

VI. TRIUMPH OVER TRAGEDY

LESSON VI

Mayan Revelation Number 292

TRIUMPH OVER TRAGEDY

A Pollyanna Attitude Will Not Suffice

Look for the Way Out

When You Reach the End of Your Resources

Happiness in Spite of Tragedy

Summary

Beloved Perfector:

We now come to the sixth, and last, Lesson in the Series, YOU CAN TRIUMPH. During the past weeks you have been learning how, through the power of your mind and soul, you can break thought-habits that would prevent you from living triumphantly. You know that it is possible for you to surmount disappointment and loneliness. You have become aware that as you face minor irritations and frustrations with calmness, you establish attitudes that help you to wisely cope with trouble far more serious in nature. In this Lesson we will review the principles of thought-control that must be applied day by day if a person is to gain strength to

meet adversity with courage. We will present the steps that are necessary if one is to find happiness in spite of tragedy.

No tragedy, however great, can place you in a helpless position unless you allow the situation to absorb all of your attention. With God's help you can find the advantage in any disadvantage. You can refuse to spend your time whining and complaining. You can summon your intelligence and your will to see that although much is lost, something worth saving is left. You can use the resources at your command to salvage all of life's values.

Approach this Lesson with the Prayer:

PRAYER

Dear Father, I thank Thee that Thou hast not left me to struggle alone. Make me aware that in my darkest hour Thou wilt never forsake me, but wilt guide and uphold me when I turn to Thee. As I study this Lesson, open my mind that I may grasp the Truths here presented and be prepared to meet tragedy with wisdom and courage, whether I face it now or in the future. In the Master's name, I pray. Amen.

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A POLLYANNA ATTITUDE WILL NOT SUFFICE

If you are an optimist it is easy to brush aside slights and trivial disappointments. When small misfortunes come your way you quickly turn your attention to other matters. But when your business suffers bankruptcy, or your child is crippled by an accident, or a loved one dies, what will you do then?

It is useless to pretend that what has happened only appears to be a calamity and that everything is really all right. It is futile to minimize the gravity of the situation.

When real tragedy strikes, your only hope of triumph lies in the ability to fasten your frail craft to a Power greater than the waves of adversity. If you attempt to depend upon your own strength alone, you will be engulfed by discouragement.

Modern ocean liners are equipped with huge gyroscopes that spin rapidly, exerting a force that tends to keep the ship steady even when high waves are dashing against it. When a violent storm breaks, the vessel may roll to a certain extent, but it does not pitch and toss as would a boat without these stabilizers.

A deep faith in God will provide you with a spiritual gyroscope. Remember that the Almighty cares for you and that He can help you to build something fine out of what appears to be a wreck. Trust that the Eternal God can bring good out of misfortune, and heartache will enable you to maintain your balance and to keep control of your life when you experience tragedy.

You can maintain poise even when the going is rough. You can ride life's breakers. You can possess a faith that will keep you calm and serene when you are hit by disaster. You can be spiritually triumphant throughout all your earthly voyage.

Declare with the Psalmist:

"The Lord is my light and my salvation; whom shall I fear? The Lord is the strength of my life; of whom shall I be afraid? ...

For in the time of trouble he shall hide me in his pavilion; in the secret of his tabernacle shall he hide me; he shall set me up upon a rock. ...

Wait on the Lord; be of good courage, and he shall strengthen thine heart; wait, I say, on the Lord."

— Psalm 27:1,5,14

If your faith is anchored to confidence in God's sustaining love, you can ride out the storms of life. You will not be submerged by the gales of adversity and grief.

For the intelligent man or woman, trust is based upon belief in a God who is not capricious, but who has a loving concern for each person whom He has created. This rules out any thought that God wilfully sends calamity upon us.

The Almighty has made for us a glorious world. It provides an environment that not only offers food and shelter for our bodies, but a challenge for our minds. If complete safety had been given to us we would lack the incentive to adventure. If sickness had been eliminated, and no effort were required to achieve success, man would have become mentally lazy and would have lacked the sterling qualities of character frequently developed through suffering.

We should not crave a placid existence, but a vital, abundant life. This comes through making the right choices. At times we must take risks. We must brave danger, hoping for the best.

While God never sends calamity upon us, He does not set aside His universal laws to save us from accidents or illness. This makes a certain amount of pain and suffering inevitable. It is the price we pay for the privilege of free choice.

Surely we would not want to be puppets, pulled about by the strings of our Creator! So let us never become bitter when tragedy befalls us.

Tragedy frequently occurs because of man's ignorance or carelessness. The surgeon's hand is unsteady. The driver fails to stop at a corner. The mechanic neglects to tighten a screw. The husband forgets his vows. The mother indulges her son, instead of letting him learn the satisfactions that come from service. These errors lead to tragedy. But let us never blame God for them. They are not of His planning, but result from our failure to heed His voice. They are but the other side of the coin of human relationships.

Many of the deepest satisfactions of our lives come from the love and the affection of our family and friends. As they have the power to help us, with it comes the ability to hurt us deeply. The two cannot be separated.

Clearly see that God does not send tragedy upon you, but He will help you in your hour of need and will show you how to turn trials into triumphs. Fully grasp this idea and it will help you gain the courage to rise above despair. When tragedy strikes, you need more lasting help than any Pollyanna philosophy of life can possibly bring. So, put your confidence in God's continual care and in His ability to mend broken lives. This will give you the incentive to use what strength you have, and to discover how to triumph over tragedy.



LOOK FOR THE WAY OUT

Charles Kingsley said: "The men whom I have seen succeed best in life have always been cheerful and hopeful men, who went about their business with a smile on their faces ... facing rough and smooth as it came."

Not one of us can escape all the storms of life. Every year we go through some rough places, and sooner or later, we are certain - if we live a normal life span - to encounter tragedy in some form. Then, if we will not foolishly think that we must depend upon our own wisdom and strength alone, but will seek both human and divine guidance, we can find a way out of whatever dilemma we are in.

In any tragic situation the picture is not all black. Some areas reveal streaks of light. So when you face an appalling situation, focus your attention upon any element that is bright. Summon your will to push aside depressing thoughts so that you can gain insight into the hope that the future offers.

Margot, a young woman of twenty, while bending over her books, found that the letters ran together. Try as she would, she could not read the print. An eye examination led her physician to say to her, "In two years you will be blind. There is nothing we can do to save your vision."

This was tragic news and might have caused some people to panic, but not Margot. She had been studying occupational therapy, and now - with the aid of a friend who read to her - she continued her studies feverishly. She began doing volunteer work at the state hospital, teaching the mentally disturbed. As she worked with troubled people, she was aware of their needs and their responses. She also concentrated upon the layout of the buildings, how many steps were needed to reach the entrance, which turns were necessary, the length of each corridor, and where the supplies were kept.

When I first met Margot she was a paid employee at the hospital. Each morning she arrived by taxi. With facility she walked up the steps and through the corridors, keeping close to the right wall, but not groping. As she moved about, and as she taught her classes, many did not suspect that she was blind.

When Margot received the news that she was losing her sight, she did not sob

rebelliously. She looked for, and found, a way out of the blackness that was before her. This is an important step for anyone to take when he is confronted by a tragic situation - whether it is economic, or caused by an accident, illness, or grief. When we study the lives of the men and women who have made outstanding contributions to society, it is surprising to find that many of them accomplished their work in spite of conditions that most of us would consider overwhelming.

Dr. Booker T. Washington was born a slave. As a child, he slept in a bundle of rags on a dirt floor. After struggling for an education, he opened his first school in a dilapidated shanty. When he attempted to provide schooling for Negro boys and girls he encountered opposition not only from the white people, but also from his own race. Booker T. Washington's success was based upon a willingness to make a beginning in the right direction, however small the opening seemed. He wasted no energy in resentment. We must do the same whenever we seek for the way out of a difficult and discouraging situation.

A friend said of Kagawa, the great Japanese Christian, "He has not a sound organ in his body." After years of living in the slums, sharing his tiny room with any vagrant who came to his door, he had trachoma and his heart, kidneys, nose and throat were infected with disease. In 1930 his doctor ordered a month of bed-rest to preserve his life. Kagawa reluctantly consented. Then he dictated three books in the next thirty days. His desire to create could not be blocked. When one avenue of service was closed, he tried another.

This is the second principle to remember when the road ahead seems black indeed. If your life cannot be fulfilled in the way you hoped and expected, look for new openings.

When Paul could not preach in the temple because he had been arrested and cast into prison, he preached to the inmates and the guards. When John Wesley was refused the right to speak from any pulpit, he gave his message of hope to the crowds who came to listen in the fields.

When, for you, tragedy closes one door of opportunity, look for another. The new way may be partially hidden in the mists of uncertainty but, as you advance, more insight will be given to you. Skill in any new endeavor comes as you begin courageously the work that you feel led to do.

When you must make a fresh beginning, don't hang the past around your neck.

Respond to the new challenges lying before you.

Start where you are and go forward, even if you can see only one step ahead.



WHEN YOU REACH THE END OF YOUR RESOURCES

You will recall that in previous Lessons in this Series we have emphasized the Truth that it is necessary to turn to others for help. It is unwise for us to

snut ourselves off from companionship and attempt to carry our burdens alone. Stoic courage can lead to future illness if frustrations are left buried deep within the subconscious, and not truly surmounted.

I think of a woman who carried on bravely after her husband's death. At first she gave her friends the idea that she was self-sufficient and that she did not need their sympathy and encouragement. Not until a nervous and physical collapse made her an invalid, did those who knew her suspect that beyond her brave front hid one who was frightened and insecure.

Sharing her grief would have been more normal, and it would have steadied her over her first months of loneliness. There is a difference between the practice of unburdening one's load by gaining the sympathetic ear of an understanding friend, and the continual whining indulged in by a person who thinks only of his personal problems. In an hour of tragedy it is salutary to accept human as well as Divine support. Failure to do this encourages one to become withdrawn.

You will remember how Queen Victoria, after the death of her husband, Albert, not only wore black, but attempted to closet herself with her memories. She wasted years of her life by brooding over the past. If she had accepted the consolation of those who knew her best, it might have helped her respond to their challenge to continue to serve England. Instead, she led an existence that was little more than "death in life".

Don't always make a show of bravery when your heart is breaking because of tragedy. Tears can release pent-up emotions. Giving verbal expression to your anguish will lessen its intensity and make you better able to face the future with courage.

When you reach the end of your resources do not hesitate to accept the sympathy and encouragement of a friend or counselor. Add to this the strength that comes from prayer, and you will be able to face the future with courage that is real, instead of only a pretense.



HAPPINESS IN SPITE OF TRAGEDY

It has been truly said: "THE WOUNDED OYSTER MENDS ITS SHELL WITH A PEARL." You and I need to do the same.

Men and women endeavor to find happiness on various levels. There is the gay-hearted and romantic level at which they identify pleasure and sensual delight with happiness. There is a second level at which righteousness and generosity brings a sense of satisfaction. Incredible as it may seem, there is a high level of happiness that comes to those souls who, even in pain and trials, feel their lives are being used for a worthwhile purpose.

In rare instances, an individual may find a distorted pleasure in physical or mental suffering. But here we are not referring to such an escape, but to the wholesome happiness that comes to all who realize that their lives are in harmony with an infinite plan. This never brings joy because of pain, but in spite of it.

When we become less concerned with the transitory pleasures of life than with ultimate values, we can endure discomfort without grumbling. We can suffer disappointment without being discouraged. We can find happiness by surmounting tragedy.

Recall how, in the second and third centuries, hundreds of Christians maintained an invincible spirit, even when living under the black shadow of persecution. A knock at the door could mean that a soldier had come to arrest them, perhaps taking them away to be tortured to death in the arena where they would be torn apart by lions, or to the torture of slavery on a gally-ship. They might be taken to servitude in the Numidian mines where men grew emaciated and stooped until they appeared scarcely human; yet they had the courage to carve on the walls there, as other Christians did in the catacombs, "Vita! Vita! Vita!" - "Life! Life! Life!"

In spite of tragedy in its worst form, these men and women loved life. Their bodies could be tortured and maimed but their spirits could never be subdued. They had found the Truth: HAPPINESS DEPENDS NOT UPON CIRCUMSTANCES, BUT UPON OURSELVES.

We find "Life", and we are able to triumph over tragedy by seeing the present as part of an eternal plan. This brings the willingness to surrender our lives to God's purposes. Sometimes cooperation with the Almighty will call for our supreme effort, and at other times it will call for endless patience and endurance.

Samuel Rutherford was right when he wrote: "Grace grows best in the winter."

It is not in the day but at night when we see the stars. As the blackness grows intense we discern more and more of the beauty of the "Milky Way". And in hours of tragedy we often see, more clearly than before, the infinite beauty of God's purposes. Our faith will grow strong in hours of trial if we keep our minds free of dis-ease by maintaining absolute trust in God's ability to bring good out of apparent tragedy.

The supreme example of this is the Cross on which Christ suffered. The treachery of Judas led to Jesus' arrest. Surely God did not prompt a man to do this evil deed! Nor did He direct the narrow thinking of the religious leaders who wanted to do away with the Man of Galilee. But the Lord was able to use the tragedy of the Cross to redeem the evil thing and to shape it into an instrument of salvation.

When we attune our ears to the whisperings of God, and we put our frail lives into His Hands, He gives us strength to rise to the challenge that He offers. Sometimes our successes will come through using hours of joyous service. Sometimes they will come through using agonizing situations and triumphantly bringing good out of evil.

Be confident that beyond tragedy a fresh challenge awaits you.

Look for God's purpose for your life, and respond to the call to some new area of service.

Remember that affliction can reveal unsuspected sources of happiness.

Cooperate with God and make the best of every situation. Say with Paul: "All things work together for good to them that love God."

To summarize:

If we are to live triumphantly we must maintain a wholesome self-respect and an awareness that as long as we live God has work for us to do. This should be combined with true humility, based in the knowledge that our own strength is not sufficient for our needs. Only when we completely trust our Heavenly Father do we find the spiritual resources that make it possible for us to triumph over physical handicaps, mental anguish, and tragedy.

History is full of examples of men and women who survived disaster. Job lost his health, his possessions, his wife and children, and even the respect of his friends; yet he could say of Jehovah, "Though He slay me, yet will I trust Him." (Job 13:15). Job turned to the Almighty, praising Him through every adversity; and eventually Job found a way to build a new life out of what had appeared to be total destruction.

In every age there have been men and women who recognized that, with God's help, they could meet an impossible situation and go through it to victory. They took calamity and shaped it into an avenue for glorious service. Some faced the tragedy that was brought upon them by circumstances. Some faced the trials that they brought upon themselves.

A Scotch preacher tells of two brothers who were convicted of stealing sheep. This occurred more than a century ago, when it was the practice in the Highlands to brand such offenders with the letters "S.T.", meaning "sheep thief". One of the young men was so bitter that he left the community, became a vagrant, and was buried in an unknown grave. The other was sorry for what he had done, and he determined to pay for the sheep he had stolen and earn the respect of his neighbors. As the years passed, he established a reputation for integrity and goodness. Later he became known as the kindest, most generous man in the village.

One day a stranger saw the old man with "S.T." still visible on his forehead. He asked someone what it meant and received the reply: "It was put there a great while ago. We have forgotten the reason, but the children of the village say it stands for saint."

We can surmount tragedy by beginning again, and with God's guidance living more nobly. Our own failures, or unfair treatment, or untoward circumstances, may lay us low. But if we refuse to give way to whining or resentment, and look for the opportunity that tomorrow brings, we can find a way out of our dilemma.

Have you been afflicted with some financial disaster, or with a physical handicap that has caused the years ahead to look hopelessly black? Are you weighed down with a staggering load of grief? Your one hope is to link your life to the Power of the Almighty. Securely fasten your frail craft to One who is unsinkable. See the purpose of God for your life and give yourself unstintingly to the fulfillment of that purpose. When you follow the leading you can receive from divine

insight, and you accept the support of God's redeeming love, you can triumph over tragedy.

COMPLETELY TRUST THE LORD

FOLLOW HIS LEADING

ACCEPT THE STRENGTH HE OFFERS

Do this, and you can fearlessly build tomorrow's success upon yesterday's failures.

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In Conclusion:

We now come to the end of this Series of Lessons, considering the subject, YOU CAN TRIUMPH. It is the heartfelt hope of your Instructor that they have helped you to find the knowledge and the strength to triumph over anxiety, fatigue, self-pity and guilt; that you have been shown how to overcome the torture of loneliness, whether it comes from being uprooted, from a feeling of inferiority, or from bereavement. And in this last lesson you have been shown how to prepare yourself to courageously face tragedy, whether this strikes in the form of financial reverses, illness, or profound disappointment.

You need not become the helpless victim of circumstances. You can use your mind and your will to battle against whatever forces threaten your happiness. An essential part of our Mayan belief is that God has given to each one of us spiritual power - power sufficient to conquer every difficulty that we encounter.

It is possible for you to overcome physical and mental habits that would lower your efficiency and disturb your peace. Sometimes you can change situations that are crippling your life; and at other times you can find a way to break their hold upon you.

Even if you have been making a sustained effort to live on the higher levels of life, you find that the struggle to be your best self is never over. So eagerly seek for the guidance that this Series of Lessons has offered, and confidently trust Him Who gave you life. Whether your adversary is physical misfortune or inward conflict, with God's help YOU CAN TRIUMPH.

AFFIRMATION

I will seek for the good to be found in anxiety, fatigue, self-pity, or in guilt, loneliness and adversity. When I cannot wipe out their effects, I will rise above them and press on to new achievements.

Blessings,

YOUR INSTRUCTOR.